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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an extended school year (ESY) project that was developed and implemented cooperatively by three Michigan school districts and offers comments and suggestions for school administrators considering adoption of such a program. In the Michigan ESY project, the normal school year was divided into four terms of nine weeks each, and a fifth nine-week term was added during the summer months. Because the primary purpose of the project was to provide improved educational experiences and increased program options for students, rather than to save money, students were allowed to choose which terms to attend. Based on three years of experience with the Michigan project, the author discusses the task of developing and operating a year-round school program and presents numerous recommendations for funding, staffing, administering, and integrating an ESY program into a school district's overall educational program. (JG)

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PRESENTATION FOR YEAR ROUND SCHOOL
WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE IT WORK

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Year-round school generally means to the listener that school is conducted on a 12 month basis. If memory serves me correctly, that was the situation at Nova High School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, back in the early 1960's when they were on a 240 day school year. Today, it probably means that the school year is organized on 45 days of instruction and 15 days of vacation which accounts for 240 days of the calendar. As most of you in the audience know, the calendar year has been divided in several ways to provide different types of experiences for students in schools across the country. I suspect there are advantages and disadvantages to each type of organization.

In Michigan we conducted a tri-district cooperative effort which was known as the Extended School Year Project. This extended school year, or E.S.Y. as it was known, was built in just a little different manner. We devided the normal nine month school year into four terms of nine weeks each and established a fifth nine week term during the summer months. We are three districts, a small urban center - (a university town), a small town predominately blue collar and a suburban residential district. (Predominately executives, professionals and university people.) - with a total 9-12 population of just over 3000 pupils.

I believe we learned many lessons about the year-round school operation during our three years of E.S.Y. participation, and we also have some solid opinions of what it takes to make a 5-quarter system work. The opinions I will offer are the collective opinions of the administrators who were involved in planning and implementing the E.S.Y., and are supported by information obtained from the planning documents and the evaluation documents of the project. When I posed the question to various people who were involved with E.S.Y. as to what it takes to make the year-round school work, they came back with "MONEY", lots of it. E.S.Y., as it was constructed in the tri-district, is not a dollar saver - it is a dollar consumer. It is an educational experience however, that is worth funding. It is an educational experience that is valued highly by those who have had experience with it. Students, parents, teachers and administrators.

Let me list for you now some items that we believe to be important for establishing and maintaining a year-round school program using a 5-term model.

GOALS

I would like to state that the primary purpose for the Michigan E.S.Y. program was to provide improved education experiences for students. Specifically, we are talking about five objectives. First, to provide depth and breadth in the curriculum by developing nine week courses. Two, to give greater options to the prospective vocational orientated student. Three, to increase the opportunity of work experience and positive community involvement of all students. Four, to provide options for potential or real drop-outs. Five, to allow gifted or handicapped students a more productive learning environment.

EA 007 999

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FUNDING

A four year budget cycle with annual renewal of the fourth year is imperative. It is absolutely essential that you know the amount of dollars that will be commited to the project. Then the program specifics can be developed far enough in advance so that 9th grade students coming into the high school can plan the summer as an integral part of their educational experience. Without this kind of stability its a "catch-as-catch-can" type of existance on an annual basis. Most people are unwilling to integrate a nebulous program into their 4-year educational plan.

TEACHERS

It is important to hire creative teachers with a commitment to which terms of the year they will teach if you are on the five-term plan. When you make an administrative assignment they will know in advance what their commitment is during four of the five terms. It will help you to utilize your staff in the best possible way. Provision will also have to be made to "grandfather" your veteran staff into a five term cycle. There may be a need to use dollar incentives in order to have some of your veteran staff opt into the summer program. Its our experience, however, that some of our veteran teachers who taught during the 5th-term (summer quarter) would have chosen the summer program and preferred to take a term off during the winter months. However, with the exception of 2 persons, those who taught in the summer program taught all four terms during the regular school year. You can't let that happen - teachers do "burn-out". I use that expression in the context that they lacked that enthusiasm and drive that had made them creative teachers during previous school years. Those who are 12 month administrators know that there is a need to get away - that you have to have breaks in the routine - for renewal - to be fresh - and that is true for teachers - probably more so. Most can't handle 12 months of sustained teaching over a period of two or three years.

STUDENTS

You must provide a pay-off for students. Early graduation, or, travel experiences, or, courses not offered during the normal school year. We think the latter to be a very important incentive. The 5-quarter system also provides the opportunity to take a reduced class load during the senior year, or simply, vacation during the winter term of the regular school year. In our particular experience it worked out very well because some of our parents are professors who take sabbaticals or have visiting professor assignments, and their children are then able to accompany them without the loss of credit. In fact, some were involved in in-depth independent study with the experiences they had. Also, there is an open-endedness to the curriculum - we will talk about that a little later. Finally, we believe attendance in the 5th-term should be a voluntary choice for students.

THE CURRICULUM

It is our opinion there should be a distinct curriculum for the E.S.Y. program, but it must mesh with other terms. There is a need for individualization of objectives and outcomes. There is a need for the most creative teachers.

We do not believe that it should be exclusively a remedial or make-up session. There is a need to develop a positive attitude on the part of students and parents about summer study. It's enriching - it's the "cool" thing to do. We think that within the 5th-quarter curriculum there should be the kinds of experiences and courses that the student cannot obtain during any other term. However, students may choose required courses during 5th-quarter in order to obtain electives during the regular terms that his program would otherwise not permit. Concurrently you should develop a 9 week term system within the regular school year. When it is implemented in its ideal you would provide sequential nine week courses that would be commencing every term during the school year, because once a student attended the term in the summer he would be out of syncronization with your normal school year program. So, two efforts on curriculum development conducted separately, but toward similar objectives and toward a goal of "meshing" together at implementation.

COUNSELING STAFF

A very commited counseling staff is absolutely essential. If the counselors are not enthusiastic about E.S.Y. and sell it as a viable option to students sometime during their high school career - then E.S.Y. cannot attract students in sufficient numbers to provide for the type of flexibility and enrichment one would like to see in that term.

THE SITE

The site for the E.S.Y. program rotated among the tri-district school buildings. There is a definite appeal of the facilities for the students. The overall enrollment grew during the three years of our E.S.Y. experience and the enrollment of their students increased for the host school.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

It is important that you sell the E.S.Y. program for the right reasons. We think those right reasons all relate to an excellent educational option. As stated before, the 5th-quarter system will not save money. If you are avoiding building construction then you must stipulate which terms students attend and that's not our program goal.

ADMINISTRATION

What we discovered was that the 5th term program worked best when we had a coordinator whose duties about six months of the year were exclusively planning and implementing the 5th-term option.

In our experience we found a need for additional clerical personnel when we implemented the quarter-sytem. A registrar has been necessary. Her duties relate to registration - scheduling - grading - cumulative records and as liaison person to our data processing center. That is a brief run-through on what we considered to be the critical elements and what it takes to make a year-round school operate.

The traditional courses, for the most part, were segmented into nine week courses. Our people have done a good job of creating new courses although it is easy to identify some traditional programs in our school as four nine week experiences. We offer Advanced Placement in English, American History, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, German, Studio Art and Physics. We do have some rather interesting course titles within our course guides, such as Beekeeping, Ecological Field Studies and Greenhouse Management. We do give greater options to the prospective vocational orientated student because we are on the nine week term system. Also, we have a county district career vocational center about eight miles down the road from us. We do provide greater opportunities for work experience and positive community involvement however. We have some good things happening in community experience and career education internships. We have the co-op and the work experience as probably most of you. We do provide options for potential and real drop-outs and probably we do a better job of that being on the nine week term system then if we were on the semester or year long programs. We at Okemos have reduced our drop-outs from 52 the year prior to the quarter system to 13 one year after implementing the quarter system in a school of 1100 plus.

We have developed specific options for potential drop-outs and we have developed some affirmative action programs. The E.S.Y. experience does allow for a better environment for the gifted student and has caused us to sponsor seven A.P. programs. We are able to individualize the approach to learning for handicapped students to a much greater degree when we use the fifth term. Facility flexibility, program content, and creative teachers is the mix.

SOME SPIN-OFF BENEFITS OF THE TRI-DISTRICT 5TH QUARTER SYSTEM:

1. Meeting new people who think differently - true for teachers and students.

2. Appreciation of uniqueness of your home school.

3. Curriculum opportunities because of the season of the year. Particularly ecological experiences in Michigan.